

A CALENDAR OF
TREASURES FROM
THE RUSKIN
COLLECTION
(with additional material)

AUGUST

Guild of St George
With thanks to Museums Sheffield

Text by Louise Pullen and Stuart Eagles
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Edited & designed by Stuart Eagles

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AUGUST 1



50. Goldau.

"Goldau" plate from "Modern Painters" vol IV, after J.M.W. Turner.
<http://www.guildofstgeorge.org.uk/the-collection/>

AUGUST 2

Edward Donovan, "Studies of Invertebrate Animals, Volume III" (1790-1810).

This is not a book as such, but a volume of collected watercolour illustrations that were bound together in the 1870s for the Ruskin Collection. It contains watercolour studies made towards several of

Donovan's books on natural history. He produced a number of these, under titles such as "The

Naturalist's Repository, or Miscellany of Exotic Natural History Exhibiting Rare and Beautiful Specimens of Foreign Birds, Insects, Shells,

Quadrupeds, Fish and Marine Productions", which he

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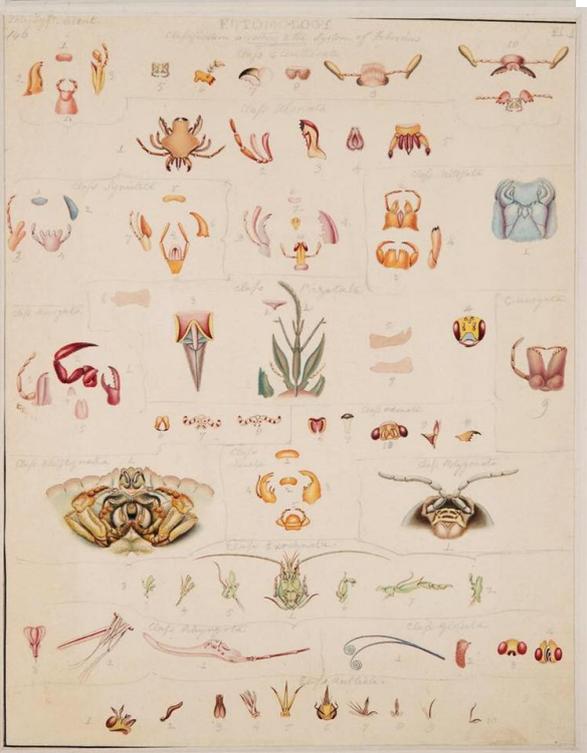
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books, he also made sure he had control over the final published illustrations themselves by etching,

engraving and hand-colouring them himself.

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AUGUST 3

"Black Vulture or Carrion Crow with American Deer" (1831) after John James Audubon.
From the Eyton Collection.

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AUGUST 4



"Leaves from Nature, No. 7" from "The Grammar of Ornament" (Plate XCVII) after Owen Jones.

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AUGUST 5

Henry Roderick Newman, "Six Florentine Anemone Heads" (1882).
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AUGUST 6

On This Day in 1854, W. G. Collingwood born.

W. G. Collingwood, "Porte Chenizelles from outside the Ramparts, Laon, France" (1882).

W. G. Collingwood acted as Ruskin's secretary and was his first biographer of note.

He made this study when he accompanied Ruskin on a tour of France and Italy. Ruskin

probably commissioned Collingwood to make studies of the architecture, whilst he was making his own studies in the town.

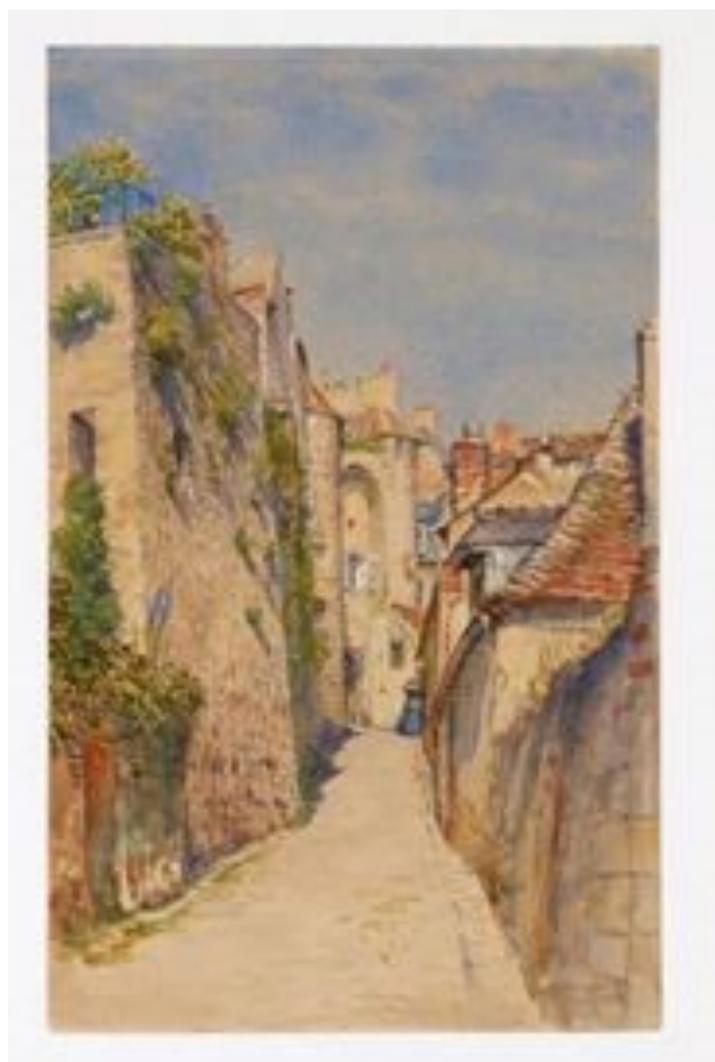
Although Ruskin rarely wrote about Laon's architecture, four years later he commissioned similar architectural studies from Thomas Matthews Rooke, writing:

"I want you to go first to Laon and see how you like it... The mouldings at Laon are the finest in the world, and for the town — you'll see." Ruskin's diaries show that he and Collingwood spent several days in Laon drawing and walking in the surrounding fields. Collingwood reported that they had spent mornings in Laon drawing architectural details and during the afternoon, rambled in the "hay fields and pear-orchards". Ruskin wrote that these fields and orchards "descend to the most beautiful and richly wooded part of the surrounding plain". This scene

shows a narrow lane that runs along the outside of the old town of Laon, along the route of what was once a moat. The old town was built on a hillside, providing a

natural defence. Nonetheless, it was of such strategic importance between Roman times and the 1300s that ramparts were maintained around it throughout the period. These enclosed the town with 6-kilometre-long walls, but since medieval times houses were built into these defences. Porte Chenizelles is one of three old gateways to the city, and leads down the main street, Rue du Bourg towards the Cathedral. There is another view of this gate in the Ruskin Collection. It is painted from the road leading right from the gate and is by Thomas Matthews Rooke.

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AUGUST 7

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AUGUST 8

"The Lombard Apennine": Plate from "Modern Painters" (Volume III) after John Ruskin (print by George Allen).

This plate depicts the Apennine Mountains and the sky at sunset, as seen from the city of Parma in northern Italy. It is found in the third volume of "Modern Painters", the five-volume treatise of art which had started out as a robust and eloquent defence of the work of JMW Turner. Originally, Ruskin intended to use the plate in the fifth volume, "On Cloud Beauty" where it would illustrate his notes on "the firmament" (the sky). But feeling that the plate would be too crowded in this volume, Ruskin used it in a chapter entitled "The Teachers of Turner" to illustrate the type of landscape that inspired the artists of the early Italian Renaissance. These were some of the artists whom he most admired, and the plate describes "the sweet free spaces of sky through which rose and fell ... the coloured rays of the morning and evening".

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14. The Lombard Apennine.

AUGUST 10

Edward Lear, "Chloephaga picta" [upland goose] (1837).
From the Eyton Collection.
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AUGUST 11

Andrew Smith: *Muscicapa Banyumas* and *Muscicapa hirundinacea* (1837).

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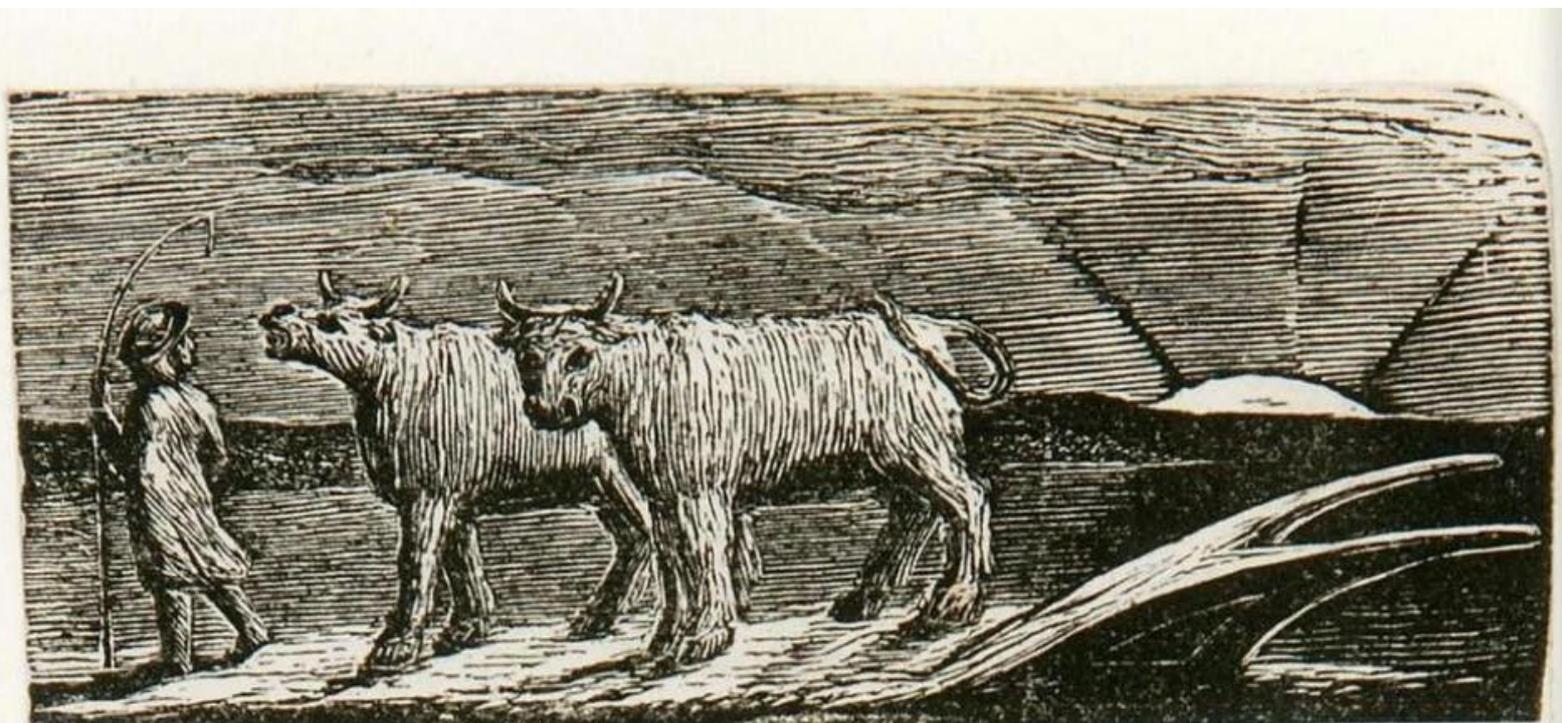
AUGUST 12

On This Day 1827, William Blake died.

Illustrations to Thornton's "Pastorals of Virgil": "Unyoked Heifers, loitering homeward, low" (1820-21).

Thornton's Virgil, properly called "The Pastorals of Virgil; with a course of English Reading, adapted for schools", was edited by Dr Robert John Thornton (1768-1837) and contained stories written in imitation of the Roman poet, Virgil. This woodcut is from a series commissioned to illustrate a story by Ambrose Philips (1674-1749) entitled "Imitation of Virgil's First Eclogue." It tells the tale of two shepherds, Thenot and Colinet. The young Colinet, dissatisfied with his life, argues with the elderly but contented Thenot, and sets off to see more of England. He travels through many storms and is ridiculed by people in the cities he visits. Colinet and Thenot later find each other again, and Thenot, taking pity on Colinet, invites him home to share in the happiness of the world around him. This woodcut, the last of the series, depicts the animals returning to the farm at the end of the day. Their yokes have been removed.

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AUGUST 13

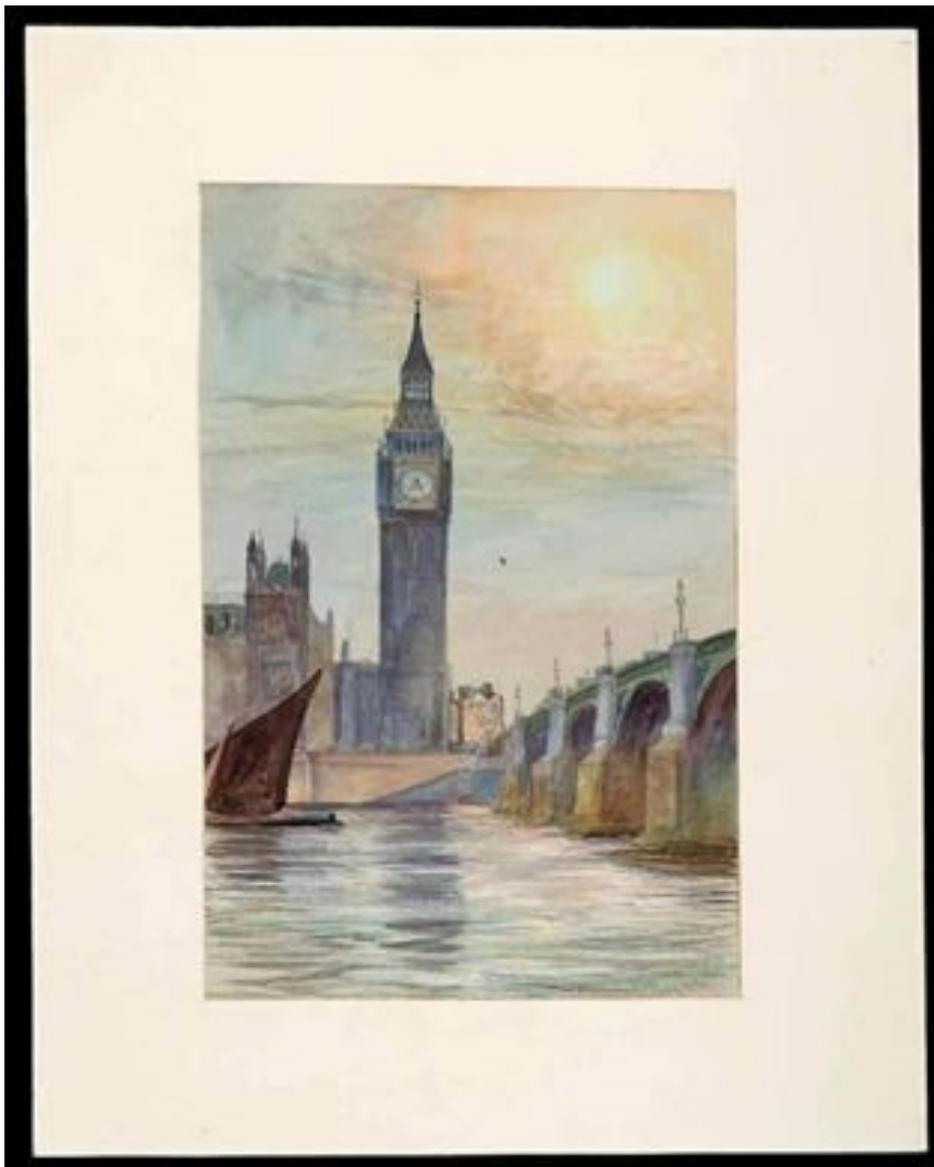


William Hackstoun, Western Front, Bayeux Cathedral, France (1883)
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AUGUST 14

John Wharltton Bunney, "Westminster Bridge and Big Ben, London" (1860s). This view of Big Ben (properly named the Clock Tower, and now the Queen Elizabeth Tower), together with the Houses of Parliament and Westminster Bridge, is very familiar to us today. But it would have been new to spectators at the time Bunney painted this scene. Work on the Houses of Parliament only finished in 1870 following a devastating fire, and the bridge too was only opened in 1863. Bunney's work might appear to have been painted at sunset, but in many ways the painting anticipates the colours seen in works by the French Impressionist Claude Monet, who painted this scene in the 1870s. Monet's works depict the view of the Houses of Parliament through the thick fogs which frequently hit London at the time, and show how pollution changed the colour of the sky to produce a permanent effect of dawn or dusk.

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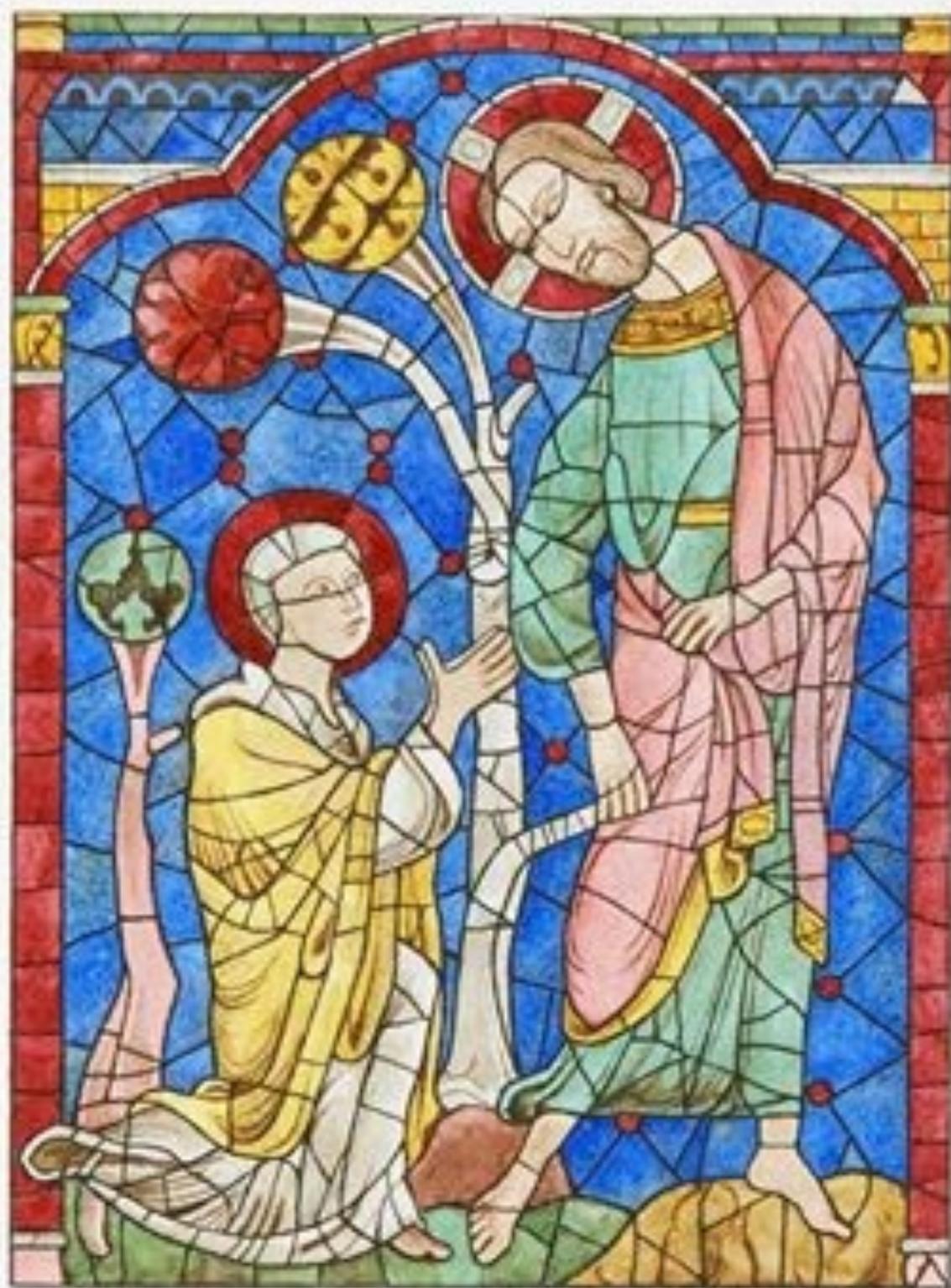
AUGUST 15

Feast Day: St Mary the Virgin.

Frank Randal, "Study of Stained Glass, Clerestory Window, Chartres Cathedral, France" (1881).

Numerous stories are depicted throughout the 152 surviving windows at Chartres Cathedral. Different saints and biblical figures are shown, together with their attributes or symbols. Themes for different window sequences include the Tree of Jesse, the signs of the Zodiac, the Last Judgement, the Prodigal Son and Christ's Passion. Scenes from the life of the Virgin Mary appear in many windows, because the cathedral is dedicated to her. Some of the windows, which date from the 1100s and 1200s, were gifts from the city's traders and guilds and they depicted their crafts in the lower windows. Noble families paid for other windows and these contain donor portraits and coats of arms. Motifs of yellow fleur-de-lis and yellow and red castles appear in some windows. These are the symbols of the French queen, Blanche of Castile, who commissioned these particular windows. This study is of a small section from the lower part of a larger window. It depicts Mary Magdalene, kneeling with Christ in front of her. This scene is traditionally known as "Noli me Tangere", a biblical story in which Mary sees, but cannot touch Christ after he has risen from death. This scene appears below the main section of a window that depicts the Virgin Mary, who holds the infant Christ to her breast. Below the "Noli me Tangere" scene are two smaller, female figures which appear in the lower border of the window. They are positioned as donor figures; real people who commissioned the window. It is unusual for both donor figures to be female owing to the lower social standing of women during this period. Perhaps they supported the "Noli me Tangere" scene because, like Mary Magdalene, they were reformed sinners, and paying for the window was part of their penance. Ruskin's main interest in stained glass was its use of colour. He commissioned numerous copies of stained glass for the Ruskin Collection, which he compared with manuscript illumination. However, at Chartres, Ruskin was also interested in the patterns and designs in the windows themselves. Regarding the scenes of the trades, and the design of foliage, he wrote: "Those old workmen were not afraid of the most familiar subjects... [and depict them in] beautiful medallions. Therefore, whenever you want to know whether you have got any real power of composition or adaptation in ornament, don't be content with sticking leaves together by the ends,—anybody can do that; but try to conventionalize a butcher's or a greengrocer's, with Saturday night customers buying cabbage and beef. That will tell you if you can design or not."

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AUGUST 16



Frank Randal: "Study of Stained Glass, 'The Embarkation for Jerusalem', from the 'Legend of St Mary of Egypt' window, Bourges Cathedral, France" (1883).

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AUGUST 17

William Hackstoun, "Sheep Washing, Windsor from Salt Hill, Berkshire",
after Turner (c. 1880).

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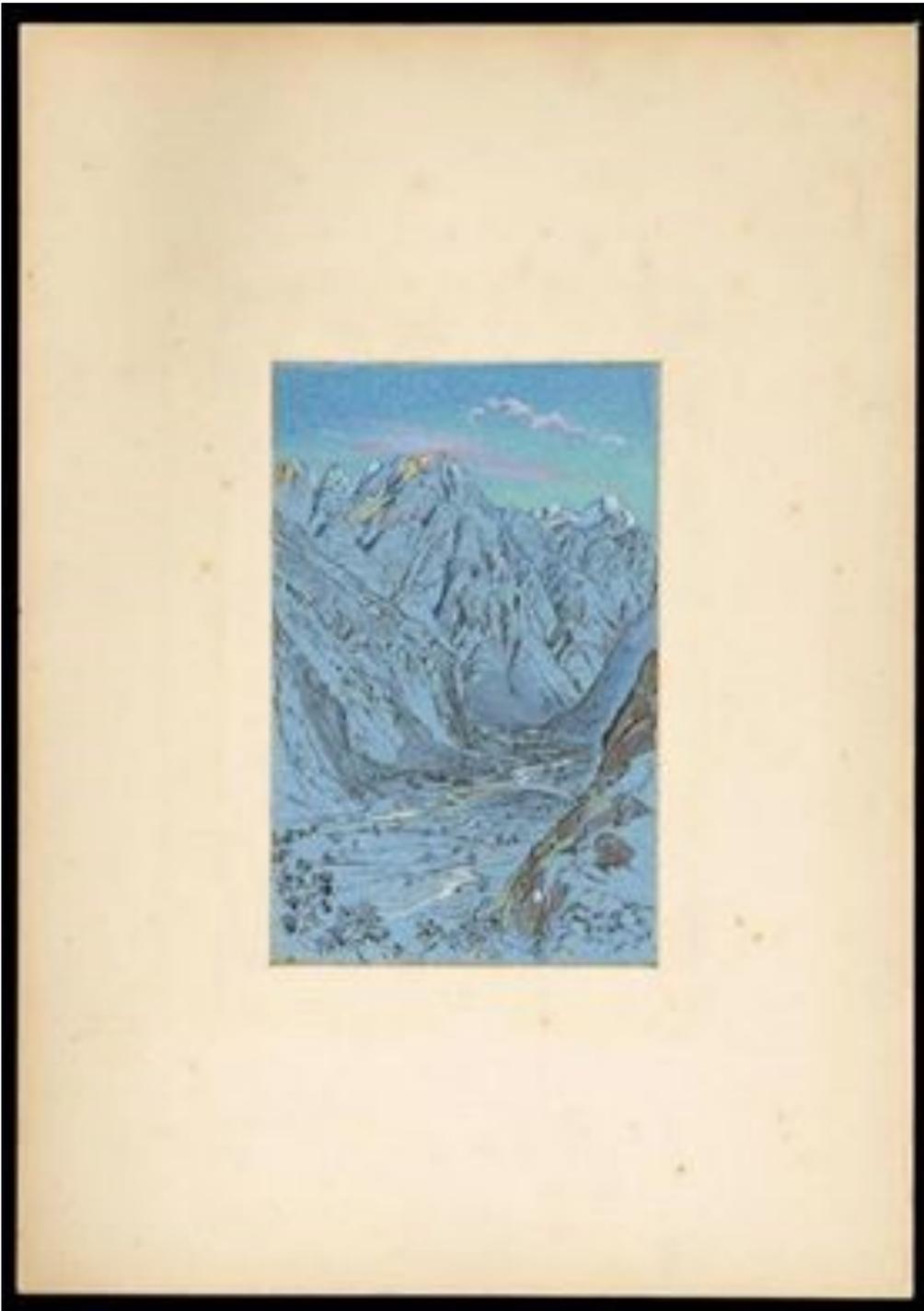
AUGUST 18



American scoter duck [*Melanitta nigra americana*] after John James Audubon (1838). This plate comes from Audubon's "Birds of America", which is considered to be one of the most beautiful illustrated books ever produced. Audubon observed and painted many of the birds and their habitats from life, but also shot and stuffed birds so he could study them closely. He wired them into positions he had witnessed the birds make in life. Nevertheless, Audubon was worried by large-scale hunting, and saw "Birds of America" as a way of recording America's birds for conservation purposes. Yet Audubon arranged the book's 435 plates for visual effect rather than scientific accuracy in order to make it more appealing for art collectors as well as people interested in birds. The Audubon plates in the Ruskin Collection were collected originally by the ornithologist Thomas Campbell Eyton, who cut up and folded his plates so they would fit in folders that he had made to house his collection of 7000 bird images.

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AUGUST 19



John Wharltton Bunney, "Scene in the French Alps" (1863).

This view is probably of the Chamonix valley on the border of France and Switzerland. Bunney has used pen and ink to focus on the mountain forms in front of him, and bodycolour, a thickened form of watercolour, to show the effect of the clouds above the high peaks. It is most probable that Bunney made this drawing in ink from life, but may have added the colour later. The paper Bunney chose for this drawing is a coarse pale blue paper, which JMW Turner popularised for watercolour painting.

With a darker toned paper, it is possible to create brighter highlights with pale coloured paint, which stand out over the rest of the work. When the work is un-mounted, small holes are visible around each edge, where Bunney has attached his

paper to a board. This would have proved more portable on the mountainside.

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AUGUST 20

Charlotte C Murray, "Study of *Gentiana ciliata*" (c. 1880).
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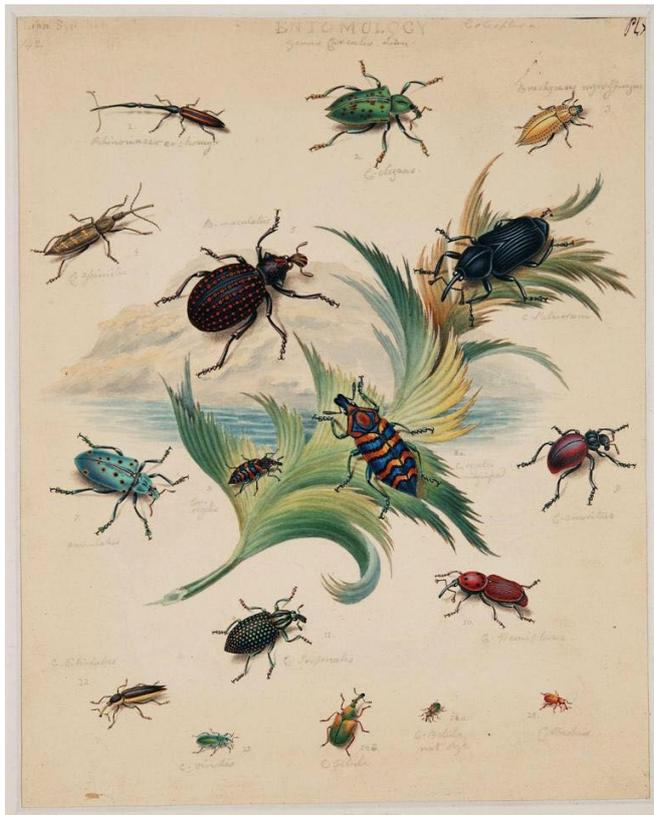
AUGUST 21

Thomas Matthews Rooke, "The Lower Church, Brieg, Switzerland" (1884). Brieg (usually called Brig) is an historic town in the mountainous Valais region of Switzerland. The area was thriving by the 1500s owing to the Simplon Pass, a natural route through the mountains from Brig into Italy. By the 1800s, the area had become a haven for Alpine tourists as a new carriage road through the Pass meant that the region could be reached more easily. Rooke based himself in Brig after receiving a commission from Ruskin to paint "as much of the quaint streets and general picturesque as you feel able." Although the impressive mountain scenery of the Alps had thrilled Ruskin since childhood, he also felt that the Alpine villages emphasised the power and majesty of nature. Ruskin was also intrigued by the hardworking lifestyle of Alpine workers and the effect this had on their religious beliefs. Ruskin intended to write about this in a book called "Our Fathers Have Told Us", although he never completed the work.



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AUGUST 22



Edward Donovan, "Studies of Invertebrate Animals, Volume III" (1790-1810).

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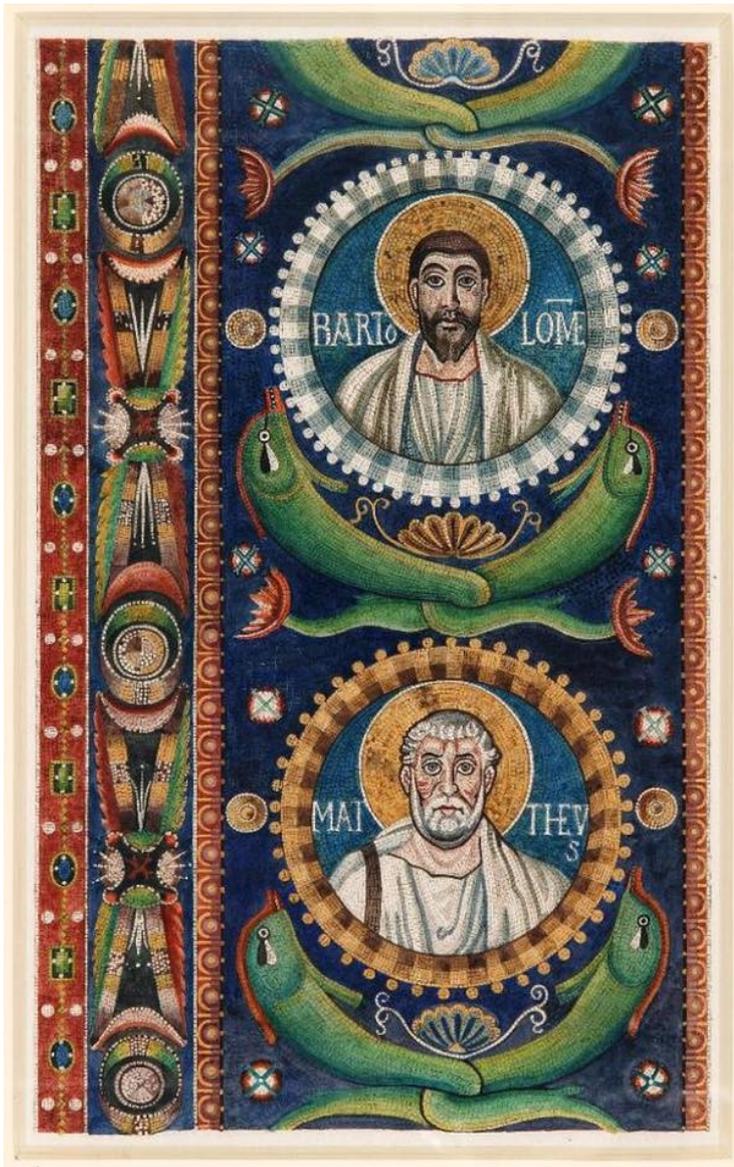
AUGUST 23

Pied harrier (1790-1810), possibly by John William Lewin (1770-1819) or William Lewin (1747-95).

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AUGUST 24



On This Day: St Bartholomew's Day. This design comes from a 1500-year-old mosaic which fills a large part of San Vitale. The inscriptions reveal that it features Saints Bartholomew and Matthew. These medallion images, as well as others, decorate the underside of an archway. They are high up, so Randal probably made use of a high-level ambulatory to capture the right perspective. Randal had been commissioned by Ruskin to make records of the mosaics before their possible restoration. They weren't actually in danger but Ruskin felt that they needed to be better known anyway. He planned to use the studies in a book called "Our Fathers Have Told Us", which was to consist of "sketches of the history of Christendom." Though he never finished the book, he had planned for Ravenna to feature in the second chapter in a history of Theodoric, a 6th-century king who built churches in the city and whose portrait also features in San Vitale's mosaics.

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AUGUST 25

Frank Randal: "Fresco Decoration in the Baptistery of St Jean, Poitiers, France" (1883).

<http://www.guildofstgeorge.org.uk/the-collection/>



AUGUST 26

On This Day in 1931: Hugh Allen died.

Hugh Allen, "Study of Young Leaf Twigs; Spanish Chestnut" (1880-85).

Records suggest that this study is one of a set of plant studies made under Ruskin's instruction. There are several more of these studies at Whitelands College in London, to which Ruskin also gave a small collection. They may have been carried out as part of Ruskin's research for "Proserpina", a botanical book in which Ruskin wrote in detail about each section of the leaf and the importance of recording the "biography" of each plant. Hugh was the son of George Allen, an engraver whom Ruskin had employed to illustrate his books and by this time was Ruskin's publisher. Hugh Allen knew Ruskin personally, and would have made the studies to Ruskin's exact plans. If they were meant to be for engraved illustrations, his studies would not have needed colour. Even so,

Ruskin's instruction for painting plants was to start by learning to paint in black and white successfully, before moving on to colour.

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AUGUST 27

Frank Randal, "Church at La Neuville-sous-Corbie, near Amiens, France" (1881).
<http://www.guildofstgeorge.org.uk/the-collection/>



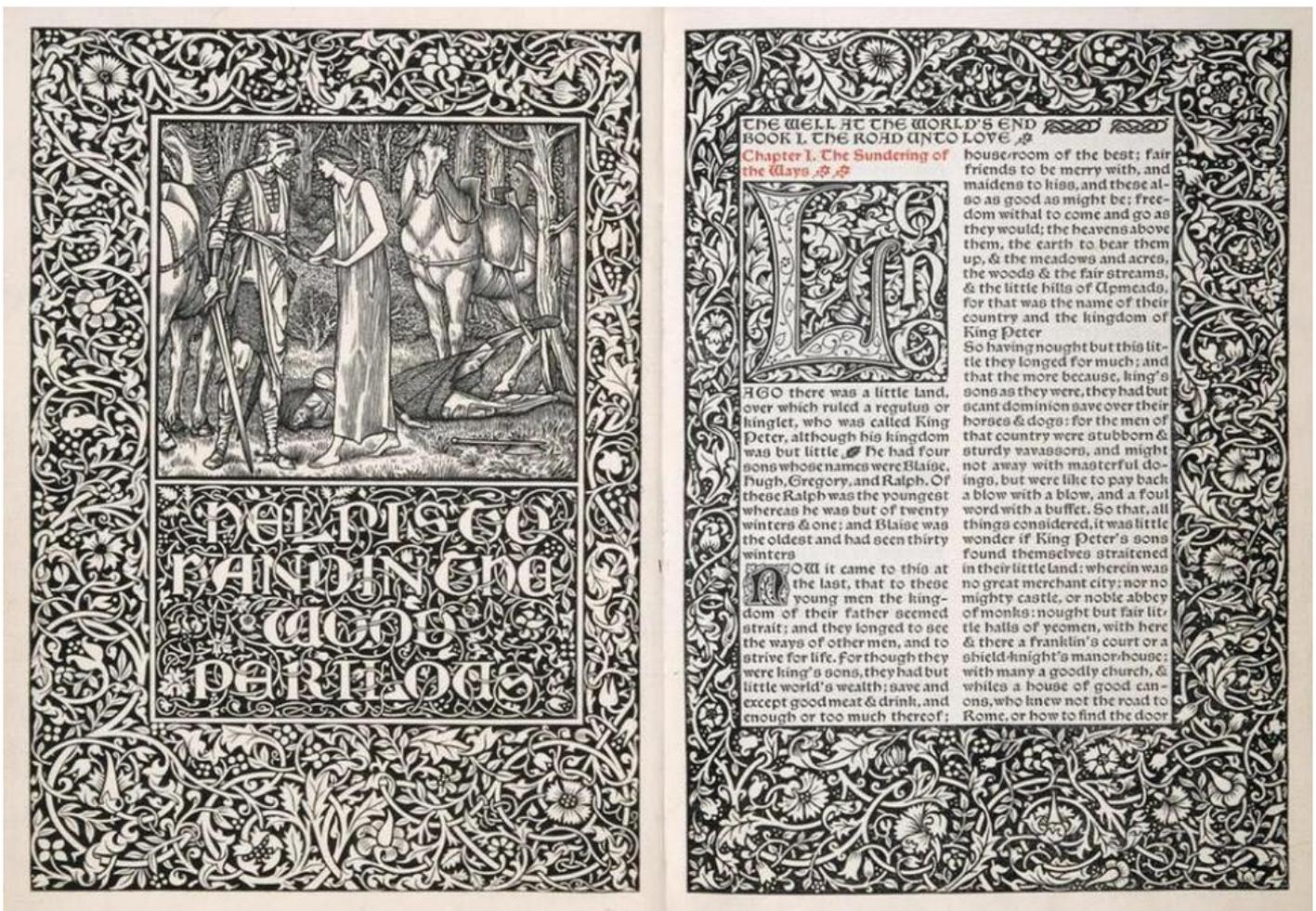
AUGUST 28

On This Day in 1833: Burne-Jones born.

William Morris, "The Well at the World's End" (Kelmscott Press, 1896) with artwork by Sir Edward Coley Burne-Jones.

Morris's book is set in a fantasy world, but is inspired by medieval stories of chivalry and romance, such as the legends of King Arthur and his knights. Morris wrote it in old-fashioned English, imitating ancient stories he admired. The story follows the exploits of Ralph, the youngest son of King Peter of Upmeads. Whilst his older brothers have left for lives of adventure, Ralph has to escape his parents, who want to keep him at home. He leaves Upmeads behind and soon hears about "The Well at the World's End" which confers a long and successful life on people who drink from it. Having set out on a quest to find the well, Ralph finds himself in adventures that include becoming a slave to finding love in the form of "the Lady of the Land of Abundance".

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AUGUST 29



On This Day: John Leech born 1817.

John Leech, "Mr Briggs goes out. His chief difficulty is, that every time he throws out his line—the hooks ... will stick in his Jacket and Tr-ws-rs" (1850).

This is a preliminary drawing for one of Leech's cartoons, which he drew for "Punch". It is one of his "Mr Briggs" cartoons, one of the first comic serial characters ever created. Leech's Mr Briggs cartoons appeared in "Punch"

between 1849 and 1851 in sets called "The Pleasures of Fishing", "The Pleasures of Horsekeeping", "The Pleasures of Hunting", "The Pleasures of Racing" and "The Pleasures of Shooting". Mr Briggs appears in each cartoon as an accident-prone gentleman whose hobbies and duties always go awry or embarrass him in some way. This drawing is from "The Pleasures of Fishing" and was published in August 1851. Mr Briggs is having problems throwing out his fishing line, as he keeps getting the hook caught in his clothes. Ruskin greatly admired Leech's work, writing that he was an "absolute master of the elements of character." He added that Leech's drawings gave "the finest definition and natural history of the classes of our society, the kindest and subtlest analysis of its foibles, [and] the tenderest flattery of its pretty and well-bred ways." He saw therefore that while Leech's drawings might be grotesque or ugly, he was truthful and observant, qualities that Ruskin celebrated in all artists. Whilst Ruskin felt in general that artists who pursued caricature over more "noble" art were in danger of losing their sense of beauty, he also believed that true caricaturists were born with the talent and that it could not be taught. Yet Ruskin felt that Leech retained talent in both areas and wrote of "the kind and vivid genius of John Leech, capable in its brightness, of finding pretty jest in everything, — but capable in its tenderness, also of rejoicing in the beauty of everything, — softened and illumined with its loving wit the entire scope of the English social scene." Ruskin placed about 100 of Leech's comic drawings in Sheffield's Ruskin Collection. Around half are from "Punch" and the others are book illustrations towards "The Comic English Grammar" and "The Comic Latin Grammar", by Percival Leigh, both published in 1840.

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AUGUST 30

Edward Lear, "The ashy-headed goose" [*Chloephaga poliocephala*] (1837).
<http://www.guildofstgeorge.org.uk/the-collection/>



AUGUST 31



Henry Roderick Newman, "The Lake of Lecco, Lombardy, Italy" (1881).

Newman painted this view for John Ruskin from the Villa Serbelloni, a hotel near Bellagio, situated at the junction of Lake Como and Lake Lecco in Northern Italy. As a teenager, Ruskin wrote about the villa in "The Poetry of Architecture". He argued that one object of the villa's setting was "to obtain a prospect up or down the lake, and of the hills on whose projection the villa is built." He noted further that "although the eye falls suddenly from the crags above to the promontory below, all the sublime and severe features of the scene are kept in the distance." He concluded that the view from the villa was "one of the loveliest situations that hill, and wave, and heaven ever combined to adorn." Ruskin thanked Newman for the watercolour: "I can't tell you how delighted I am." He said "it was a hitherto unseen thing in art — the richness with light — the realisation with sensitiveness. The honesty, with her praise of the thing loved..."

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